

Writing a Great Research Paper: **Plagiarism & Other Pitfalls** *Study Guide*

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Writing a Great Research Paper: Plagiarism & Other Pitfalls

1 DVD · 1 hr. y mins.

item #VAI-1949 · price \$49.95

isbn 1-57385-194-9 · upc 600459194994

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Writing a Great Research Paper: Plagiarism & Other Pitfalls Study Guide

Introduction

With today's busy schedules and tight deadlines, sometimes even the best scholars can be tempted to cut corners! This timely program teaches students to appreciate and demonstrate academic integrity when writing research papers. You'll learn how to evaluate materials, reference sources appropriately, and avoid inadvertent plagiarism and other common scholarship mistakes.

For easier studying and maximum success, we recommend that you view the program over a number of short sessions: don't try to absorb too much at one time. Review the entire program, or specific sections, as many times as you find necessary in order to master the material.

Perhaps most importantly: Don't forget to take advantage of your "pause" button while viewing the program. Keep plenty of scrap paper handy so you can jot down ideas, work through concepts, and more. And finally, be sure to use the myriad on-screen graphics to take notes for yourself—when you're done, you'll have a notebook you can refer back to again and again.

About Your Instructor

Karl Weber, M.A., is an educator, editor, and bestselling author in fields ranging from business to politics to test preparation. He has worked on books with such noted figures as management guru Adrian Slywotzky, Loews Hotels CEO Jonathan M. Tisch, and President Jimmy Carter.

Part 1: Selecting Sources: *Whom Can You Trust?*

One of the major traps that students fall into when writing a research paper is trusting an untrustworthy source. This could be a book that simply has its facts wrong, a periodical article that is biased for or against its subject, a website that seems objective but has a hidden agenda, or a newspaper story whose author has a known penchant for distorting the truth. Whenever you're evaluating a source, consider all of the following criteria:

- Comprehensibility
- Timeliness
- Reputation of the author
- Reputation of the periodical or the book publisher
- Apparent bias
- Nature of the work
- What others say

Part 2: The Perils of Plagiarism

Remember, your research paper must present an original approach to the topic—in other words, you must come up with your own way of looking at the topic rather than simply echoing a point of view that you found somewhere else. And you must cite sources in a scholarly fashion, which means following standard rules and procedures to explain where you found the facts and ideas you are borrowing.

To learn about various techniques for incorporating your research into your writing effectively, consult a different program in this series: *Writing a Great Research Paper: Quoting, Citing, & Paraphrasing*. And for information on parenthetical references, footnotes, and bibliographies, consult: *Writing a Great Research Paper: Formatting Your Paper*.

Part 3: Types of Plagiarism

Plagiarism includes all of the following:

- Buying, borrowing, or reusing a paper
- Claiming as your own a piece of writing from a published source
- Quoting words, sentences, paragraphs, or pages from another writer's work without giving that writer credit
- Copying another writer's sequence of ideas without giving that writer credit

Part 4: Other Rules of Academic Integrity

Additional rules of scholarly behavior that are also important to follow include:

- Resist the temptation to fake research.
- Don't misrepresent, distort, or "spin" the contents of someone else's work.

Additional Advice

As you've learned, many books, articles, etc. include references and/or bibliographies that can be invaluable tools for exploring additional research sources. But don't make the very common error of citing sources you've only read *about*—as opposed to sources you've actually read! Sometimes an "intermediary" source adds its own subtle layer of interpretation, so verify that the sources you're going to refer to in your research paper actually contain the relevant information. Misattributing information—be they facts or ideas (interpretations, opinions, analyses, or theories)—is a serious academic "mistake" that you should be careful to avoid.

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Also, when you're paraphrasing the words of another writer, be especially cautious about plagiarism. Don't just condense the phrasing, reorder the clauses, or change an occasional word here and there! Thoroughly rewrite the wording from your source material. If the language is powerful and you want it to use it in your paper, don't paraphrase it: Quote it directly. And, whenever you include a direct quotation in your notes, be sure to use quotation marks—so you'll remember it was a quote later on!

Be aware that cutting-and-pasting from the Internet has advantages and disadvantages: it can make it easier to capture complex web page addresses and long passages, but it can also make it easier to "use" another writer's words without giving that person due credit.

A final note: Modern software tools and web search engines make detecting plagiarism easier than ever. Even a single inadvertent mistake or omission in your references can "smell" like plagiarism, so be extra careful to cite every last one of your sources accurately.

Keep all of these issues in mind when you begin taking notes and later when you write your paper!